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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the statistical evidence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) violence in the United States and in the world. Statistics are from Amnesty International and the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project. Reasons why this violence exists and international human rights responses are reviewed. In addition, research on homophobia, homonegativity, and antigay violence is also reviewed. An argument for a greater role in the amelioration of prejudice against LGBT people by the American Psychological Association as the premier psychological organization involved in social justice issues around the world is presented. The paper concludes with recommendations for future directions. (Contains 25 references.) (Author/GCP).

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LGBT Identity, Violence, and Social Justice: The Psychological is Political

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LGBT Identity, Violence, and Social Justice: The Psychological is Political

Abstract

This paper reviews the statistical evidence of LGBT violence in the United States and in the world. Statistics are from Amnesty International and the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-gay violence Project. Reasons why this violence exists and international human rights responses are reviewed. In addition, research on homophobia, homonegativity, and antigay violence is also reviewed. An argument for a greater role in the amelioration of prejudice against LGBT people by the American Psychological Association as the premier psychological organization involved in social justice issues around the world, is presented. The paper concludes with recommendations for future directions.

LGBT Identity, Violence, and Social Justice: The Psychological is Political

Introduction

"There remains a great deal to be accomplished in freeing many millions of gays and lesbians from the tyranny of fear of discovery, of actual and potential economic disenfranchisement, of the burden of ridicule, shame, and scorn, and of penalties for alleged criminal behavior. Nevertheless, the recognized status, for example, of openly gay and lesbian psychologists…is light years away from their inferior and almost certainly closed status of 1954" (cited in Baxer & Carrier, 1998, p. 1, 2). This quotation is from Evelyn Hooker, the woman whose research was instrumental in the removal of homosexuality as a mental disorder from the DSM. In 2002 a person identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (hereafter referred to as LGBT) or perceived to be LGBT not only faces ridicule, shame, disenfranchisement, and possible criminal charges, but in most of the world and even in this country can face violence and even death. An LGBT identity is hazardous to one's health, mental and physical. Psychologists concerned about social justice must take an active role both professionally and politically to end this situation.

This presentation will review the prevalence of LGBT violence internationally and in this country as reported by organizations such as Amnesty International and the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-gay Violence Project, review research on the correlates of anti-gay violence and homonegativity done primarily in this country, and argue why psychology must do more in this area especially if social justice is to be a primary thrust for our field. I will conclude with recommendations for future directions in research, policy, education, practice and treatment.

International Violence Against LGBT People

"The manner in which discrimination is experienced on grounds of race or sex or religion or disability varies considerable—there is difference in difference. The commonality that unites them all is the injury to dignity imposed upon people as a consequence of their belonging to certain groups…In the case of gays, history and experience teach us that the scarring comes not from poverty or powerlessness, but from invisibility. It is the tainting of desire, it is the attribution of perversity and shame to spontaneous bodily affection, it is the prohibition of the expression of love, it is the denial of full moral citizenship in society because you are what you are, that impinges on the dignity and self-worth of a group," stated by Justice Albie Sachs, Constitutional Court of South Africa in 1998 (cited in Amnesty International, 2001).

LGBT people as well as LGBT activists around the world are targeted not for their activities but on the basis of who they are. Violence occurs in the home, school, and community. In fact schools may be one of the most dangerous places for LGBT youth (Amnesty International, 2001). Not only are LGBT youth or those perceived to be LGBT harassed but often they are removed from the schools. Children don't seek redress due to shame and fear of continued persecution. "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly obliges states to protect all children—without distinction of any kind—against violence and other abuse in the home, at school and in the community" (Amnesty International, 2001, p. 46).

Amnesty International (2001) reports rapes, beatings, and life imprisonment for alleged crimes against the order of nature in such countries as Uganda, Zimbabwe, Romania, Malaysia, the Caribbean, Russia, China, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and, yes, the

United States. In fact at least 70 countries criminalize LG relationships and some countries punish offenders with flogging or the death penalty. All over the world LGBT people face oppression. There are laws against them, freedom of association is denied, and access to services is limited or nonexistent unless they hide their identity. Places such as bars where LGBT people gather are subject to police raids. Medical services are often used to force a change to heterosexuality. These medical interventions range from institutionalization to aversion therapy, and chemical castration. Reports of abuse are rarely made due to fear of disclosure, lack of responsiveness, and knowledge that the authorities are often the perpetrators of the violence. Transgendered persons are especially singled out for torture and there is an alarming increase of this. Cross-dressing is seen as an obscenity and blackmail and extortion are commonplace occurrences.

LGBT people cannot count on the police or the courts to offer any protection. In fact in most of the world the police are the worst offenders, beating and raping the very people they are supposed to protect while in custody. "Perceived or actual sexual orientation has been found to be one of four categories that make a female prisoner a more likely target for sexual abuse" according to Amnesty International (2001, p.32). Laws and governmental officials often provide the justification for this maltreatment (Amnesty International, 2001). President Mugabe of Zimbabwe publicly called gay people less than human and therefore not deserving of human rights. The president of Uganda ordered the Criminal Investigations Department to hunt out lesbians and gays and lock them up. Since joining the United States coalition against terrorism, Egypt has begun hunting gay men alleged to be homosexual and entrapping them on the Internet in order to convince their citizens that the government and not just Muslim extremists are

protecting the morality of the nation (Gauch, 2002). Which leads to some of the reasons that governments use when denying the rights of LGBT people.

The United States is not alone in using culture, religion and morality as reasons to oppress LGBT people (Amnesty International, 2001). This occurs around the world. Homosexuality and transgenderism is considered un-Christian, un-Islamic, against Judaism, a plague, a white man's issue, un-American, un-African, and part of bourgeois decadence to name a few justifications. A more insidious reason because it's rarely explicitly noted or understood is the betrayal of gender expectations and beliefs. LGBT persons frequently challenge notions about gender-roles and the dichotomy of gender. Gay men and transgendered male to female persons are believed to betray male gender role superiority and privilege and therefore must be punished. Lesbians and transgendered female to male persons are believed to attempt to take on male privilege and therefore must be punished. Ultimately, LGB persons are believed to threaten the established social order (Amnesty International, 2001). This is a prevalent belief in the United States as well as in other countries.

LGBT Violence in the United States

A coalition of twenty-six anti-violence organizations in the United States monitor instances of antigay violence in their respective regions. The most current statistics (New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-violence Project, 2001) compare the period 1998-1999 to 1999-2000 data. Results indicate the following: Reports of separate incidents of antigay violence increased from 1,992 to 2,152 incidents. The number of victims increased from 2,249 to 2,475 and the number of perpetrators increased from 3,262 to 3,344. The increase in incidents reported reversed the declining trend noted in 1998 to

1999. Overall the current trends are as follows: Exceptionally violent and bias-related murders decreased. Serious injuries and hospitalizations and sexual assaults and rapes also decreased. That's the good news. The bad news is: Attempted assaults with weapons increased. Harassment and intimidation increased. The victims and perpetrators became more diverse, for example, there were more female perpetrators. There was an increase in heterosexual victims of antigay violence. More of the victims knew their perpetrators. They were acquaintances, friends, employers, co-workers, landlords, neighbors, relatives, and family members. More male to female transsexuals reported victimization. Police responsiveness deteriorated and there were increased reports of police misconduct and abuse.

In all likelihood there were many more instances than reported in this national document. Most victims do not report. Many areas of the United States do not have any organizations monitoring this abuse. The FBI typically underreports LGBT violence. For example in 1999 the FBI reported three murders and the National Coalition of Anti-violence Programs documented twenty-nine LGBT related murders in New York City alone (New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, 2001).

The reasons victims in this country don't report anti-LGBT violence are similar to reasons reported in other countries. Victims fear they won't be believed, the authorities will abuse them more, disclosure of their sexual identity will have disastrous and ongoing consequences, nothing will be done, and/or services offered will not be culturally sensitive. Often significant others urge the victim not to report and just to move on with life (New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-violence Project, 2001). The psychological impact of victimization makes moving on with life difficult.

World bodies interested in human rights and social justice have made statements decrying violence based on a person's being. Interpretations of these documents have concluded that these documents protect LGBT people.

International Human Rights Response

The United Nations Convention against Torture prohibits force, pain, suffering, both physical and mental when it is based, among other areas, on discrimination and is perpetrated by a public official or any person in an official capacity or with their consent (Amnesty International, 2001). Much of the LGBT violence perpetrated around the world is therefore prohibited by this convention. Abuses against LGBT people documented by Amnesty International (2001) violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Policing the bedroom, the underpinning of laws against gay relationships, violates the privacy rights guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights. The United Nations Human rights Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights bans discrimination against transsexuals and the UN document urges governments to decriminalize sexual orientation and to prohibit sex discrimination in their constitutions. The Commission on Human Rights further states, "International standards require that there be concerted state policy to eradicate practices even if the proponents argue that they have their roots in religious beliefs and rituals" (Amnesty International, 2201, p. 45). If society continues to ignore the principles of these world documents, psychologists will continue to try to alleviate the psychological symptoms of victimization.

Psychological Affects of Victimization

There is a large body of literature documenting the effects of torture and abuse. Much of this literature has studied refugees seeking political asylum (Gorman, 2001). While a comprehensive review of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper, some of the findings have relevance to what victims of anti-LGBT violence face. It is important to recognize that this is where mental health and human rights converge (Gorman, 2001). Often when psychologists work with victims of violence the victimization is depoliticized due to the emphasis on personal psychological symptoms. Victimization based on who a person is rather than what he or she does robs that person of his or her voice, and deters others from speaking out making the abuse a political and human rights issue.

Politics aside, the typical symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder such as somaticization, denial, guilt, and numbing of emotion occur with torture and LGBT violence victims. Gorman (2001) notes that with victims of torture there are three processes psychologists must help with: safety, reconstruction, and reconnection. He especially emphasized the support of family. One difference between political refugees from torture and LGBT victims is that LGBT victims don't always have the support of families (DiPlacido, 1998). A recent study of LGBT victims of violence in the Sacramento area found that there is more psychological damage with hate crimes than with other violent crimes (Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999). Victims of hate crimes suffer more depression, stress and anger and the symptoms last longer. LGBT people are likely to have experienced anti-gay violence in one form or another from early adolescence (D'Augelli, 1998; DiPlacido, 1998). Cumulative negative experiences cause greater

stress. These negative experiences result from homophobia, and heterosexism. The majority of the research on this comes from the United States. Once again a comprehensive review of this literature is beyond this paper but what we have learned is important for the future work of psychologists in this area.

Homophobia and Heterosexism

"The challenges unique to lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths are mostly caused by cultural and institutional victimization as well as direct attacks. Both systemic victimization and direct attacks must be eliminated" (D'Augelli, 1998, p.206).

SOV, Sexual Orientation Violence, a term coined by D'Augelli (1998) begins early. By the end of elementary school, youth know that heterosexuality is good and homosexuality is bad. Not conforming to gender role stereotypes is unacceptable especially for boys. For those youth who consider themselves LG moving into adolescence with the increase of hormones that is part of puberty means that they cannot express age-appropriate romantic behaviors (D'Augelli, 1998). In addition they cannot get needed peer support at a time when peers are the most important group in an adolescent's life (Savin-Williams, 1994).

Today's youth in the United States are more likely to be victimized because they are more visible. According to a review done by D'Augelli (1998) the normal victimization of LGB youth includes marginalization, negative family responses to disclosure, and the impact of HIV/AIDS. LGB youth are more likely to run away, abuse drugs and alcohol, engage in risky sexual behavior, have school problems, exhibit depression, anxiety, and symptoms of PTSD, and attempt suicide (D'Augelli, 1998; Savin-Williams, 1994). In studies done by Savin-Williams (1994)"Many youths report

that they became prostitutes to survive and to escape physical, sexual, and emotional abuse in their homes and schools" (1994, p. 265). According to the 1989 Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide (as cited in Savin-Williams, 1994) suicide is the leading cause of death among LGB youth. Suicides are believed to stem from the difficulties of growing up in a homophobic society. Suicide attempts are linked to coming out to self and others. The research supports relationships between stigma and negative psychological effects but cause and effect has yet to be studied (Savin-Williams, 1994). The roots of the prejudice that causes SOV are developmental and must be studied from adolescence through adulthood.

Studies examining antigay, lesbian, attitudes have been done with high school students, juvenile offenders, and with college students. Studies examining behaviors and affect are beginning to be done. A brief review of current research shows the following:

- Baker and Fishbein (1998) found that male prejudice toward LGs increased between grades nine and eleven and female prejudice decreased.
- Van de Ven (1994) in a study of undergraduates, high school students, and young offenders which examined attitudes, affect and behavior, found high school students and young offenders to be more prejudiced, more angry, and engage in more negative behaviors, than undergraduates. In terms of anger and behaviors there was no difference between high school students and young offenders. Similar to findings of other studies males were more negative than females.
- In 1996 Van deVen, Bornholt, and Bailey teased out two affective components of homophobia. They considered anger to be an external component and guilt defined as personal discomfort as an internal component, Students chose from a

list of activities such as, see an LGB video, or talk with LGB people either individually or in small groups as a means to measure behavior. They also chose from an adjective list of descriptors of LGB persons to measure affect. Their results did not show gender differences either by gender of subject or gender of target. Anger seemed to be stronger than guilt for affect and behavior. The authors concluded that a homophobic response set is a combination of thoughts feelings and actions.

- Bernat, Calhoun, Adams, and Zeichner (2001) examined negative affect and aggression. Using an erotic stimulus they varied the target as either heterosexual male or gay male. The erotic gay male condition resulted in increased anxiety, hostility and aggression as measured via shocks to a fictitious opponent. The homophobic group of subjects didn't differ in aggression toward the heterosexual male from the non-homophobic group.
- In a study looking at self-report attitudes, behaviors, and the effect of social desirability Roderick, McCammon, Long, and Allred (1998) found that social desirability didn't impact men's reports but did impact women's reports. The authors wondered if social desirability for men means having negative attitudes toward LG people. Another finding was that negative behavior fell into either passive-avoidance behavior (walking away) or more active, aggressive behavior (hitting, damaging property) and passive-avoidance behavior is more common. Similar to other studies they found that the more contact subjects had with LG people the less negative were their attitudes.

- Patel, Long, McCammon, and Wuensch (1995) also looked at homonegativity and aggression in college males. They found a strong correlation between the two. A disturbing finding was that a potential for aggressive behavior against LG people was seen even in those males who didn't register homophobia.
- Dormitory life has been difficult for LGBT college students. D'Augelli and Rose (1990) sampled 500 freshmen living in dorms. The study explored subjects' views of lesbians and gays, personal knowledge of LG people and homophobia. Subjects reacted more negatively to lesbian and gay lifestyles and toward gay men. Few subjects of either gender knew LGB people either well or causally and nor did they have the desire to know more LGB people or more about LGB life. Almost all of the subjects had heard disparaging remarks made about LGB people and most had made these types of remarks.

These studies are important because the literature has found that the perpetrators of antigay violence tend to be young males in their late teens or early twenties (Harry, 1990; Herek, 1998; Herek & Berrill, 1992). Therefore in order to end the violence we need to understand the many components of homophobia as well as how antigay attitudes become antigay violence. In a review of literature about perpetrators Harry (1990) found that those who perpetrate violence tend to do it in groups rather than individuals. Often it's to prove their "maleness." The stereotypic male role justifies violence and society condones violence against LGBT people. LGBT people are considered of little value. Sometimes the perpetrators actually go looking for people they perceive to be LGBT. Sometimes the opportunity just arises. Most people, as evidenced by the research I reported on earlier, merely disapprove of those who are or perceived to be LGBT, The

people who disapprove don't perpetrate violence. But, they also don't act as guardians, protectors or helpers of LGBT people (Harry, 1990). Rather than help or protect, many disapprovers use religion or politics to sanction what has come to be known as Reparative Therapy. Members of our own psychological profession practice Reparative therapy (Drescher, 1998).

Reparative Therapy

In 1918 Freud stated (as cited in Drescher, 1998, p.31), "...we cannot accept the proposal...that psychoanalysis should place itself in the service of a particular philosophical outlook on the world and should urge this upon the patient for the purpose of ennobling his mind. In my opinion this is after all only to use violence, even though it is overlaid with the most honorable motives."

Reparative Therapy seeks to cure homosexuality and to change homosexuals into heterosexuals. According to a review by Drescher (1998) today's reparative therapists draw from pastoral counseling, have abandoned the neutrality psychoanalysis is based on, urge conformity to traditional values, idealize heterosexuality, file affidavits in support of antigay amendments and believe that their homosexual clients must be ostracized in order to be cured of homosexuality. In spite of the declassification of homosexuality as an illness these therapists continue to treat it as one. They have formed their own organization, NARTH, National Association for Research and Therapy of homosexuality. The work of NARTH perpetuates the hostile climate for LGBT people in this country. Psychology must respond. Mental health and social justice are linked.

Psychology, Social Justice, and LGBT Persons

In 1932 Franklin Delano Roosevelt said: "In these days of difficulty, we Americans everywhere must and shall choose the path of social justice…The path of faith, the path of hope, and the path of love toward our fellow man" (Halprin, 1997, p. 55).

Psychology as the science of human behavior subscribes to a value system that advocates for diversity and for equal treatment of all (Fowers & Richardson, 1996). According to Fowers and Richardson (1996) it is "…a moral movement that is intended to enhance the dignity, rights and recognized worth of marginalized groups" (p. 609) and "…actively fights against political oppression and economic injustice in the world, in our country, and especially in our local communities" (p. 611). Therefore, psychology must use the tremendous amount of knowledge gained through research to change the policy of oppression toward LGBT people that currently exists. This must happen on an international basis.

According to Marsella (2000): "Today's world requires psychology to acknowledge the global context of our times" (p.1). Our knowledge must be used to advocate for the repeal of laws that serve as a justification for the torture and imprisonment of LGBT persons. International conferences such as the recently APA sponsored International LGB Conference must continue to occur (De Angelis, 2002. It is at these conferences that a network of psychologists from around the world can share knowledge, resources and offer support to those whose countries still use old justifications for the oppression of LGBT persons. One of the resources currently being

translated into a number of different languages is APA's Guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients (2000).

But the response cannot come only from divisions and organizations specifically dealing with LGBT identity issues. According to Juan Pablo Ordonez, a human rights defender, "The defence of human rights of homosexuals soley by homosexuals is impossible—or at best, places them in imminent peril of their lives. The struggle must be taken up by outsiders, gay or straight people, who are not themselves victims of this hostile society" (Amnesty International, 2001, p.58).

APA must engage with international psychological organizations to remove the illness classification of LGBT persons. China just did that (De Angelis, 2002) and if a country like China where a great deal of repression occurs can be moved to declassify homosexuality as an illness than so can other countries. APA must take a stronger stance against Reparative Therapy both here and around the world. Amnesty International (2001, p.61) recommends that medical associations "...prohibit their members from participating in any treatment aimed at 'curing' or 'treating' it" (homosexuality).

The education of psychologists must include the recent research and understanding about the lives of LGBT persons and how to do LGBT Affirmative therapy. Psychologists must be trained to do public policy work and to advocate for social justice. Whether we agree or not the fact is that the psychological is political. One important piece of public policy where psychologists can add their expertise is in the advocacy of laws and constitutional amendments banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity expression discrimination. Psychologists need to be active not only in public policy but in the training of prison workers, police, medical

personnel, immigration workers, teachers, and on and on to be sensitive to LGBT issues. A critical area for psychologists and counselors to be active in is making schools a safe place for all children. "The response that is urgently needed now…is for public officials educators, clergy, and all people of conscience to acknowledge, condemn, and counter anti-gay prejudice and violence" (Berrill, 1992, p.40).

Of course research must continue. Research must examine the psychological correlates of anti-LGBT attitudes, emotions, behaviors, and thoughts throughout the lifespan. Occupational biases must be understood and the mechanism for effective change must be developed. Religious and political biases and their mechanisms also must continuously be examined. LGBT persons must be studied longitudinally so we know about both healthy and unhealthy identity development, and maintenance.

In 1943 Franklin Delano Roosevelt made a statement to White House correspondents that still rings true for people concerned with social justice. It's a statement that has relevance for the topic of this paper, LGBT Identity, Violence and Social Justice. "Unless the peace that follows (WWII) recognizes that the whole world is one neighborhood and does justice to the whole human race, the germs of another world war will remain as a constant threat to mankind" (Halprin, 1997, p.122). Psychology should heed his statement.

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